



Ed Quinn for The New York Times

Demonstrators and police officers clashed yesterday as thousands of students gathered at City Hall to protest cuts in money for education proposed in the city and state budgets. Sixteen people were hurt and 60 arrested.

# *Students Leave Classes to Rally Against Budget*

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By MARIA NEWMAN

Thousands of university and high school students, accompanied by professors and teachers, walked out of their classrooms yesterday to protest proposed budget cuts to education, drawing instant rebuke from Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and Gov. George E. Pataki.

At a rally in front of City Hall, the protest turned into a skirmish when police officers in riot gear tried to keep demonstrators, mostly students, from marching down Broadway. Some officers sprayed pepper gas at the protesters; some protesters threw black paint at the officers. Sixty people, mostly students, were arrested, and 16, including 11 police officers, were injured. All of the injuries were minor, the police said.

Some 14,000 public school students cut their classes to protest the budget cuts, school officials said. Not all of them made it to the City Hall rally, however, which was organized by students from the City University of New York. City officials estimated the crowd at 10,000.

It was the largest student protest in New York City in several years. Even some elementary school students attended on unofficial class trips led by teachers and parents, among them several classes from Public School 3 in the East Village.

The rally included thousands of City University faculty members, who marched in the morning across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall in their colorful academic robes.

Shortly before 3 P.M., some demonstrators tried to turn the rally into an unauthorized march to Wall Street. The police said students be-

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Ed Quinn for The New York Times

University and high school students demonstrated against education budget cuts yesterday. Sixty people were arrested at a rally in front of City Hall as the protest turned into a skirmish with police officers.

## Students March in Protest Over Proposed Budget Cuts

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gan pushing at the barricades around City Hall Plaza, knocking down one officer. When other officers tried to help him up, the students began kicking and shoving, said Deputy Police Commissioner Tom Kelly.

Students and others at the demonstration said the protesters were only reacting to the surge of officers against them. The commotion lasted more than an hour, leading to a sit-down protest by hundreds and ending in the arrests, mostly for disorderly conduct. Demonstrators said that police officers beat some of the protesters.

"It was very ugly," said Andrew Long, co-chairman for Student Affairs at the City University of New York Graduate Center. "I thought to myself, here we are in the middle of city government and they're going to do this to us."

The Mayor, whose name was misspelled in various ways on the students' placards, did not emerge from City Hall to address the rally. Instead, he criticized the protesters at a press briefing in the afternoon.

"They're supposed to be in class today and they're not," the Mayor said. "And they are not paying for their own education. Somebody else is paying for it."

Mr. Giuliani, who addressed a boisterous police rally in front of City Hall in 1992, before he became Mayor, went on to suggest that the protesters' time would be better used in looking for jobs to pay for their education.

The rally was prompted by Mr. Pataki's proposed budget for the new fiscal year, which starts April 1. The Governor's and the Mayor's budget proposals call for higher tuition at state- and city-supported colleges and for cuts to public schools that could eliminate hundreds of programs and increase class sizes.

In Albany, Governor Pataki said that those criticizing his cuts to universities were waging "a divisive campaign of fear-mongering and distortion to scare both students and parents."

He particularly criticized university administrators and professors for encouraging students to protest by canceling classes and helping

them organize on university time and with university resources.

Whether related to the rally or not, there were signs in Albany yesterday that at least some restoration of the city and state university budgets was in the offing. Asked about the education budget, Zenia Mucha, the Governor's director of communication, said, "We may be able to restore some of the budget cuts, but not all of them."

In a separate interview, State Senator Joseph L. Bruno, a Republican and the majority leader, said, "I'm optimistic about some restoration."

New York City school officials said thousands of students walked out of the city's high schools, ignoring public address system messages by principals imploring them to stay in classes.

Some merely left momentarily to march around their block and then returned to classes, said John F. Ferrandino, superintendent of the high schools division. Others never returned.

At Central Park East High School, an alternative school on Madison Avenue in Manhattan, 140 students left at noon; only 30 remained. At James Monroe High School in the Bronx, about half the school left at noon to join the protest; Dolly Garcia, an eleventh grader, said that there were only about 5 or 6 students in each of her classes, which usually number 30.

At City Hall, the younger students held up handmade signs announcing their schools.

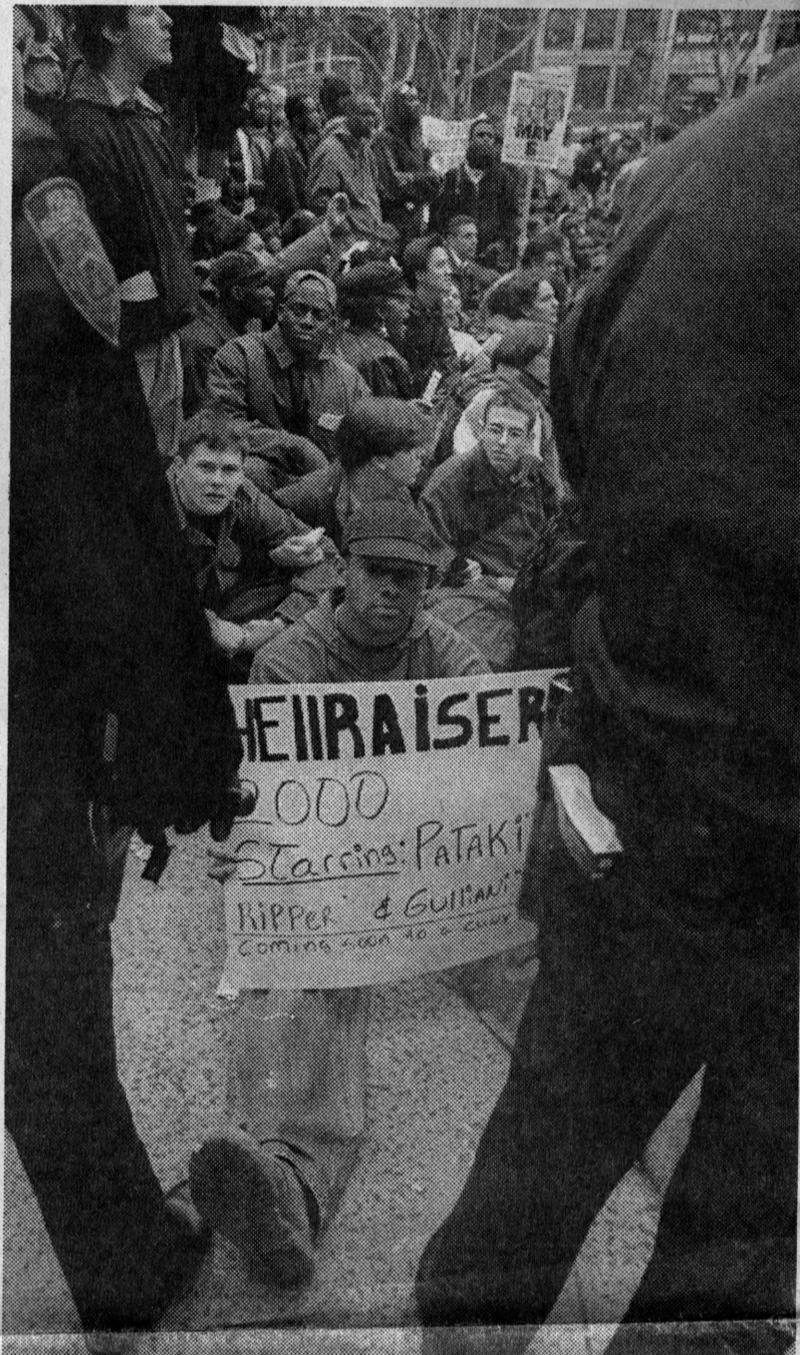
"The reality is, that in a school system that doesn't have money now for decent books, how are they going to make further cuts?" asked one protester, Kevin Squalls, 15, a sophomore at Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn.

David Buchbinder, a parent who accompanied about 60 students from Public School 3 in the East Village, said that the rally was "an exercise in representative democracy."

The children from the school were eager to talk about what they thought of the budget cuts.

"The teachers will get more migraine headaches because there will be more kids in their classes," said Doron Taleporos, 11.

Most of the rally was peaceful, even as City Hall Plaza began swelling with students who arrived hours



Philip Greenberg for The New York Times

## Text of Pataki Statement

ALBANY, March 23 — Following is the statement issued today by Gov. George E. Pataki about protests of his proposed cutbacks in funds for the State and City University of New York.

New York is facing a \$5 million budget deficit for the upcoming fiscal year. We must close this deficit and bring desperately needed fiscal sanity to the budget process.

In my budget proposal, I asked SUNY and CUNY to help the taxpayers close this deficit by cutting their bureaucracy and instituting a number of sensible reforms. Unfortunately, they chose to wage a divisive campaign of fear-mongering and distortion to scare both students and parents.

Professors have canceled classes so students could participate in protest rallies. Administrators have used their taxpayer-funded resources to engage in partisan politics during working hours. It is an outrage to observe such unprofessional and partisan political behavior by professors and administrators who should know better.

If SUNY and CUNY increased their student-faculty ratio by one student, to 20.5 to 1, it would save taxpayers \$18 million a year. If professors increased their average teaching load by a mere 1 hour to 15.5 hours a week, it would save taxpayers \$25 million a year. If sabbatical leave for faculty were eliminated, taxpayers would save \$17 million a year.

I have suggested specific steps that can be taken by SUNY and CUNY to help New York get its fiscal house in order. I hope they will make a good-faith effort to help our taxpayers and forego the type of behavior that poisons the climate for an honest debate.

before speakers took to the stage at noon. Young people banged on pots and pans, swung from trees and lamp posts and chanted with the speakers.

Some students carried a black coffin with a sign on the side that read, "Our futures are smashed because of no cash."

About 2:50 P.M., as some demonstrators began urging the crowd to march to Wall Street, the police officer fell, witnesses said.

"That's when the tenor changed," said a witness, Norman Siegel, the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

Ali Nematollahy, an adjunct professor at Hunter College, found himself at the front of the crowd when some of the students decided to break out of the barricades to march to Wall Street.

"The cops were pushing and the

students were pushing back," he said. "Nobody really acted violently as much as there was pressure to break out of the park.

"It wasn't a rational thing," he continued. "A lot of people were angry. Some people started screaming. The horses started coming, but I don't know if they had been antagonized."

He said the police officers suddenly started to spray gas. Mr. Nematollahy had a hat, which he pulled over his head.

Mr. Kelly said the students provoked the disturbance when they knocked down the officer.

"There was bottle throwing, a lot of screaming and general disorder when the students wouldn't move out of the way for our officers to assist the other officer," he said.

Mr. Kelly said students started to kick and punch the other officers.